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Goaltender Brett Fullerton fist bumps captain Patrick Saini during their game on Jan. 20 in Minden. /TIM YANO Special to the *Times*

Frost Centre reunion in the works

by **JAMES MATTHEWS**
Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

This year is pivotal among milestones for the Leslie M. Frost Natural Resources Centre.

And an effort has taken root to mark a number of those anniversaries and to recognize the centre's significance.

Barrie Martin, who was employed 28 years at the centre, told Algonquin Highlands township council Jan. 18 about how 2024 would be an opportune time to welcome back some of the people who worked and learned at the centre.

The Frost Centre represents a lot of history for the township, Haliburton County, and the province. And this year is significant as it marks a half century since the centre's inception, 20 years since it was shuttered, and 77 years since it began as the Ontario Forest Ranger School.

see COUNCIL page 2

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MH begins process to hammer out 2024 budget

by JAMES MATTHEWS
Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Minden Hills property owners should have a better idea how this year's tax bill will look by March 5.

Township council received the first draft of the 2024 municipal operating and capital budget during a special meeting Jan. 18. Other special budget meetings will take place in February before there's a final draft for council's consideration March 5.

In its current form, this year's spending plan presents a tax levy of $11,246,235. That's a levy increase of $966,784 or 9.41 per cent compared to 2023.

Last year's assessment growth reduces that levy to 7.81 per cent.

"I would say that in the future we might not see such a gap between the increase in spending and the increase in tax rate," said Greg Bedard, the township's director of finance.

The impact on owners of properties assessed at $100,000 is an increase of $32.81 to this year's tax bill over last year.

The typical single-family home in Minden Hills has an assessed value of $209,000. Such a property will see a $68.56 increase on their tax bill.

The typical seasonal recreational dwelling is valued at $316,000 for an increase of $103.66 this year.

Cynthia Fletcher, the township's CAO, said global markets, supply chain issues, and inflation continue to put financial pressures on Minden Hills' operating and capital budgets.

Maintaining current service levels, while balancing these pressures and cost increases, were at top of mind when inking the opening salvo of the 2024 spending plan.

The thing about annual budgets is that the money in municipal coffers is generated by the taxation. The tax levy is determined by property values as assessed by the provincial government.

That assessment process has been stalled since 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic. So property values haven't changed since the last assessment in 2026. And here's the rub for municipalities: Economic change wasn't stalled over that time.

So the township's treasury has to cover bills that have risen with inflation with a stack of coins better suited to eight years ago.

"We continue to see that growing disparity between the assessed value of a property and what its market value is," Bedard said.

The two provincial grants the municipality receives have been reduced. The Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund was decrease by $48,600 to about $1.8 million. The Ontario Community Infrastructure Fund was reduced by $28,941 to $1.6 million.

The federal Canada Community Building Fund, which used to be called the gas tax, was increased by $17,962 to $219,169.

Decreases in the provincial grants means the township has to spend more to maintain current level of service, Bedard said.

"Good news is our community service revenues," he said. "We are budgeting for an increase of $45,000."

The 2024 rate supported budget proposes a two per cent water rate increase and a three per cent wastewater increase.

Those increases align with the Ontario Clean Water Agency (OCWA) rate study and projects a budget surplus, which if realized, will be transferred to their respective reserve funds for future capital needs.

At the time the OCWA rate study was tabled in February 2022, inflation was forecasted at two per cent. Inflation has been considerably higher.

> "There continues to be a problem with the lack of facilities for the public in our community"
>
> — JIM DAVIS, MINDEN RESIDENT

The township's contact with OCWA is adjusted annually in June based on the consumer price index information available from Statistics Canada. This resulted in a 2023 increase of 6.7 per cent.

"High inflation puts pressure on the rate supported budget and staff continue to work with OCWA to ensure our rate structure moving forward is sufficient for our current and future needs and affordable for system users," Bedard said.

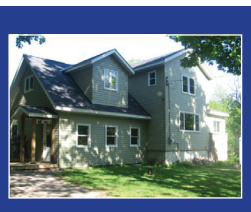
The Minden Water System user rate will increase by seven cents to $3.48 per cubic metre. The Minden Wastewater System rate will increase by 12 cents to $4.24 per cubic metre.

The proposed rate increases will adjust the minimum billings per quarter to $142.61 for the water system and $199.45 for wastewater. That's increase of $2.93 and $5.88 respectively. The Lutterworth Pines System billings will be adjusted to $318.48 per quarter for a $6.24 increase.

Resident Jim Davis said he understands there's a lot of stresses on the municipal economy, the financial picture, trying to figure out how to best spend money. He basically asked when the municipal public washroom facilities will get some attention.

"There continues to be a problem with the lack of facilities for the public in our community," he said. "I'm here hoping that the township can find some funding to improve our public washrooms, especially as we are a society of an aging population."

"I would agree with you that there is something needs to be done," Mayor Bob Carter. "It is a challenge."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Council in favour of reunion

from page 1

"So it seems 2024 is a key year for considering a reunion," Martin said.

Hundreds of people worked over the years at the centre and at the Ministry of Natural Resources at that location. A reunion would be of interest to many of those people, as well as friends and supporters of the centre over the years.

Many of those people have already expressed interest in returning for the multi-day reunion, Martin said.

"Who knows, it might be a way of encouraging the current owners to further develop the facility with the community in mind," he said.

Some of the ideas for events being tossed around include an open house with presentations and exhibits, guided hikes, a series of speakers, and perhaps a concert and a gala.

"There's a number of elements that could be part of it," he said.

The reunion could be hosted at any of the community centres in the area. But attempts are underway to investigate availing space at the Frost Centre.

Given the time needed to plan the events, Martin said a reunion will likely be in October.

The great question with any such event is money. To that end, Martin said there's indication that donations are forthcoming. They could also sell tickets and rally sponsors.

"There are some sources of funding," he said.

But he acknowledged that it would be difficult to bring plans to fruition without money from the municipal, county, and provincial governments.

"I don't see scaling it down to a day or a half day," Martin said. "Most people would have to travel to the area to participate in the reunion."

Mayor Liz Danielsen said the township could help out by way of letters of support for the reunion to be sent to possible funding providers at the provincial and federal governments.

She said council would consider reducing or even waiving fees for the use of community venues. And, she said, the township could assist with promotional efforts.

"It's a benefit to the municipality as a whole," Danielsen said. "I'm quite sure we can help you there."

Councillor Lisa Barry agreed.

Danielsen said there's a municipal policy that limits outright donations to such events. But the possibility of a partnership could be explored, should organizers see fit.

"We have a No Donation policy," she said. "But I'm sure that there's a way that we can talk about that, how we can overcome that."

Deputy Mayor Jennifer Dailloux is an alumna of the Frost Centre. She said it was a seminal part of her upbringing.

"And I know that's the truth for lots and lots and lots of Ontarians," Dailloux said.

To QR or not to QR; is that a question?

by **EMILY STONEHOUSE**
Editor

Most of us likely remember a chapter before quick response (QR) codes became a thing of normalcy. We used to be able to go into restaurants and open up a paper version of a menu, right after we selected if we wanted smoking or non-smoking. The menu would sometimes have scribbles and scratches on it; indicating changes in food availability and drink differences. But that was the way life was back then.

QR codes have been around since the mid 1990s, but didn't start really picking up steam until the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. "It really blew up during covid," said Thom Lambert, who focuses on marketing and tourism for the County of Haliburton. "They became popular with the no touch policies around the pandemic. And then when people realized how cost effective they were, they stuck around."

The small black and white barcode can be utilized by snapping a picture on any smartphone, which takes the visitor directly to the desired destination on the world wide web. This gives businesses and organizations the ability to direct traffic towards any URL they want to share; whether that be a digital menu, a map, a link to event tickets, or an informational page online. The options are endless.

The County of Haliburton has been using QR codes on the majority of their print advertising for the past few years. Lambert referred to the Hike Haliburton maps that at one time flew off the shelves. "We know that people still love print materials," he said. "But we were noticing that much of the map wasn't relevant after the festival, and it would be out of date."

Enter: QR codes. A few years ago, the county introduced the concept of the "evergreen map", which allowed Lambert and his team to continuously change the relevancy of the map, and keep it fresh via access through a QR code that anyone could use.

Not only did this keep the map alive, it also allowed the county tourism team to track who was looking at it, which is a valuable tool to utilize when strategically planning upcoming marketing initiatives.

"We noticed that the majority of click throughs came from outside the county," said Lambert, "which is great news for us."

Lambert shared that often, stakeholders do not have access to where visitors are finding their website. This could make marketing difficult when they do not know where to run their ads or put their energy into. But if they can see that folks are accessing their site via a specific QR code, it allows them to invest more time and money into exploring that particular avenue.

QR codes are not just for the tech savvy anymore, either. Anyone can make their own QR code by visiting any QR generator, and entering the URL they desire folks to visit. They can also be tweaked and changed based on updates and relevancy. No more chicken scratch on menus when an item is out of stock, now it's just a few clicks and everything can be updated; saving stakeholders time, money, and energy.

Lambert noted that use of QR codes is quite high amongst seniors, which he believes is due to the fact that the margin of error is lower when snapping a picture of a code, versus typing in a lengthy website name.

He also believes that all businesses - not just tourism - could benefit from utilizing the QR tool. With this in mind, he hopes to offer some workshops on how to embrace the QR life over the next few weeks at HCDC's The Link. "We will cover basic digital stuff, and it will be pretty hands-on, with anyone who wants to learn," he said.

If you are interested in learning more about QR codes and how to use them within your business, contact Lambert at tlambert@haliburtoncounty.ca,

Health board hears it's time to accept COVID as part of life

by **JAMES MATTHEWS**
Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Welcome to the new normal in communities under the umbrella of the Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge (HKPR) District Health Unit .

Dr. Natalie Bocking, the medical officer of health and the unit's CEO, said during the health board's monthly meeting Jan. 18 that it has become apparent that COVID-19 and associated ailments have become the new normal.

While we're not seeing waves of COVID-19 as had been experienced, Bocking said health officials are still grappling with illnesses associated with COVID-19.

"The new normal is that COVID-19 is part of the mix of respiratory viruses that are in our communities and (that) spread illness," she said.

"Unfortunately for some people in the community, especially those of advanced age, it hits them harder in particular, and leading to hospital admissions and, unfortunately, some deaths."

In the HKPR district, there has been 44 outbreaks of COVID-19 with 78 hospital admissions and 17 deaths so far in this 2023-24 respiratory illness season.

Influenza activity has been comprised of 111 lab-confirmed cases with seven hospital admissions.

"I would say this respiratory season has followed a more familiar path to pre-pandemic respiratory (illness) seasons," she said. "So not quite the same as last year where it was really the first respiratory season with multiple viruses in the mix."

Bocking said she brings updated tallies of hospital admissions and deaths to each board meeting as a means of keeping the virus' impact at the fore.

"I think it's important that we still acknowledge this," she said. "I think there's a desire from all of us to pretend that it's behind us."

People should switch gears from working toward a large-scale extraordinary pandemic response to COVID-19 being among respiratory illnesses. Rather, it has come time to figure out a way for us to take the virus in consideration in our daily activities into the future, she said.

Influenza numbers aren't as high as last year's significant infection rate, but Bocking said there has been higher than feared patient numbers this season compared to before the pandemic.

Even though health officials brace for respiratory illnesses every season and plan to deal with a certain infection rate, that expectation doesn't mean the acute care system is not struggling.

"We see media reports on Emergence Department visit backlogs, waiting times," Bocking said. "We see concerns about overloading of in-patient beds and there no being sufficient in-patient beds."

Even a "regular level" or slightly increased level of respiratory illness is still a burden on the acute care system "as it faces multiple things such as burn-out of employees, insufficient in-patient beds and resources," she said.

"It's a complicated picture, but certainly there are things that we can do day-to-day."

Those things include ensuring vaccines are up-to-date and that people are taking precautions to stunt a virus' spread.

"That will help to prevent increased burden on the Emergency Department or hospitals," she said.

Going mad about plaid

Jack Brezina hosts the first toonie auction of Friday night while Olivia Humphries holds up the items. The auction was a part of the Flannel Frolic, which was a fundraiser for the Highlands Summer Festival. /ADAM FRISK special to the *Times*

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WINTER PARKING
From November 1st, 2023 to April 30th, 2024 overnight parking is illegal from midnight to 8:00 AM on all township roadways and parking lots. Parking in the turning circle of a cul-de-sac is prohibited during all hours. Vehicles parked in areas that interfere with snow removal operations will be towed away and/or ticketed at the owner's expense.

CULTURAL CENTRE
The Agnes Jamieson Gallery is now displaying selections from the permanent collection including new acquisitions by André Lapine ARCA (1866-1952). The exhibit will be on display until February 3. The Gallery is open to the public Tuesday – Sunday from 10 am – 4 pm. Admission is by donation. For more information, please call 705-286-3763 or email culturalcentre@mindenhills.ca

SNOW REMOVAL
Pushing snow across roads and streets is a safety hazard and against the law. The *Highway Traffic Act* states no person shall deposit snow or ice on a roadway without permission in writing from the road authority responsible for maintenance of the road.

VIRTUAL, IN-PERSON COUNCIL MEETINGS
Council and Closed Session meetings are currently being conducted with a hybrid model of in-person (Council Chambers) and electronic participation in accordance with the Municipal Act. Meetings begin at 9:00 AM unless otherwise noted. The scheduled upcoming meetings are:

January 25 – Regular Council Meeting
February 1 – Special Meeting of Council
February 5 – Special Meeting of Council
February 8 – Regular Council Meeting

Members of the Public are invited to observe Council proceedings by attending in-person or via the live-stream link on the Township CivicWeb Portal at mindenhills.civicweb.net/Portal/MeetingTypeList.aspx. Visit our website for more information.

Work progresses on recreation centre

by JAMES MATTHEWS
Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Work to rehabilitate the Dorset Recreation Centre is moving forward.

And Adam Thorn, the public works manager at Algonquin Highlands, told council during its regular meeting Jan. 18 that work to renovate the community facility is progressing well.

Council heard in October that the contractor had completely removed mould from the upper level at the centre. And the work to clean and remove mould from the facility's downstairs level had been ongoing at that point.

The scope of work includes only a ventilation system as opposed to a full heating, ventilation, and air conditioning system (HVAC). Optimal ventilation will still prevent future mould occurrences.

Thorn said at the Jan. 18 meeting that the HVAC contractor has been working steadily in the weeks since the last update.

Some of the interior walls at the building's interior are of concrete core.

"Nothing they didn't know," Thorn said. "It's not a new surprise."

But it has been taking some time to work through that, to cut through about 12 inches of concrete.

"It took a little bit of time to get the holes put through," he said.

There's been a lot of plumbing and electrical work done inside the building. And municipal staff have been steady going with clean-up chores.

Drywall has been hung and mudded.

"They're still working on some of the main floor," Thorn said. "The design was finally put through."

There was a little hiccup on the building design of its main space, he said. It was a plumbing concern.

"Nothing to be concerned about, but it did set us back a little bit on that," he said. "Other than that, it's moving forward. It's going really well."

Thorn said it's great that many years of work is coming together.

"This is years of work," he said.

Minden assures complete firefighter training compliance

by JAMES MATTHEWS
Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Minden Hills has a way to affordably meet the training requirements of the fire department's largest slate of recruits.

Cynthia Fletcher, the township's CAO, told council when it met Jan. 11 that the municipality is in an anomaly situation this year. There's a glut of firefighters who need to fulfill the mandatory training requirements for Firefighter I and Firefighter II certifications.

The Minden Fire Department had its largest recruit hiring this year.

Volunteer firefighters must have National Fire Protection Association certifications in fire fighting and hazardous materials (HazMat).

Firefighters, officers, fire prevention personnel, and fire investigator will have to be certified by July 1, 2026. Technical rescue specialists will need to be certified by July 1, 2028.

New members must take a certification course to be certified within two years of joining the department.

Fletcher said the Minden Hills firefighters will be trained by way of a service contract with the Ontario Fire College this year.

The department has a roster of 24 volunteer firefighter positions. There are 17 active volunteer firefighters and there are 12 firefighters who are fully certified.

The training plan for 2024 is to certify the remaining 12 firefighters along with any new 2024 recruits.

"So that we can make sure that the Minden Fire Department is in 100 per cent compliance," she said, and added that there's additional training that firefighters will avail of this year with a county-wide program.

"There is the intention of rejoining that county-wide program for all aspects in 2025," she said.

The arrangement will allow a one-year buffer period should any firefighter be unsuccessful or needs to be re-tested, mitigating risk of non-compliance.

MFD plans this method for the year and then will re-join the Haliburton County recruit program once our firefighters are certified and the department has smaller numbers of new hires.

The costs to implement the training program for 2024 can be accommodated within the typical annual allocation for Firefighter training. While a greater number of firefighters will be certified, the intent is to conduct training on existing fire practice nights.

Firefighters are already scheduled to attend these sessions, saving costs over time.

All costs can be recovered in the typical Minden Fire Department training budget.

"It is not the intention to deviate away from the county-wide program," Fletcher said.

Councillor Ivan Ingram wondered how it would be possible to recover the training costs from the department's budget this year when the 2024 spending plan has yet to be determined.

"I'm just kind of confused what that number might look like," he said.

"I think what we're saying to you is this is mandatory training so we would be putting that forward first in advance of anything else (to be budgeted)," she said.

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- **The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee (a musical)**
- **The Miracle Worker**
- **The Birds & the Bees**

Saturday, January 27, from 10 a.m.
Sunday, January 28, from 12:30 p.m.
at **St. George's Anglican Church**
617 Mountain Street, Haliburton

Character descriptions and other important details, including how to register, can be found in the audition package, linked from the HSF home page at **www.highlandssummerfestival.on.ca**

Home is where the heart is; Ingram takes on county tourism

by **EMILY STONEHOUSE**
Editor

If there's one thing that Haliburton County has no shortage of, it's stories.

And in the role of tourism manager, Angelica Ingram plans to celebrate all the stories that make our community alive, thrive, and vibrant.

"There's a lot of really great stuff happening in this community," said Ingram, "and I just want to build on all of that."

Originally hailing from Richmond Hill, Ingram came to the county in 2009, freshly finished her degree in journalism, and ready to tackle the role of reporter with the *Haliburton Echo*. "I loved the idea of writing for a small town newspaper in cottage country," she said. "My parents laughed and said I would never stay, but I'm still here!"

Ingram spent nine years at the newspaper, during which time she completely immersed herself into the community as a whole. "I had never been to Haliburton before," she said, "but I immediately fell in love with it. Loved the people, loved the community, and I had formed way more connections in my short time here than I had ever made back in the city."

Upon having her first daughter, Ingram pivoted in her life to find a career that gave her some flexibility to spend more time with her young family. She began working part-time for SIRCH Community Services as their communications and marketing coordinator. "This gave me the opportunity to really hear more stories from the community, and celebrate the different services available in the county," she told the *Times*.

County tourism manager Angelica Ingram is no stranger to community economic development, and she hopes to incorporate her years of personal experiences into the role. /EMILY STONEHOUSE Staff

During her time at SIRCH, Ingram became involved with the Haliburton BIA. "That was really my first taste of economic development and tourism," she said, "and I really loved it. I loved seeing everything our community could do, and was doing, and that really became my area of interest."

After five years at SIRCH and two with the BIA, Ingram spotted the job posting for the manager of tourism with Haliburton County. "They were big shoes to fill," noted Ingram, referencing the people who had held the position prior to her: Tracie Bertrand and Amanda Shultz, who each made their mark on the county tourism scene before moving on to new opportunities.

"I may have a lot to learn about tourism," said Ingram, "but I do know about this county."

Ingram hopes to offer a new spin on the position; something that reflects her own journey and relationship with the community. "I came here 15 years ago as a young, single person, and now I am married with kids," she said. "I want to bring that young, family perspective to the role. Keeping things in mind like recreation and events for families, because that is all part of our economic development."

Ingram noted that the local industry is just as crucial as marketing to tourists, as they make up the economy the majority of the year. She is eager to develop initiatives and campaigns that celebrate local audiences, and work with stakeholders to support events that cater to families all year round; particularly during shoulder seasons. "I love to see all the events happening here that appeal to all different demographics," she said, "and I would love to watch those things grow."

While Ingram has been in the role for just one short month so far, she knows she has her work cut out for her, and that the tourism world isn't always rainbows and sunshine.

"I know it's not easy to be positive when your entire livelihood and business is dependent on weather, and the limited disposable income of tourists," she said. "I want us to all try to work together, and find ways to market to all different tourism markets so that we all benefit."

Through it all, Ingram noted that there are numbers and statistics affiliated with this type of position, and while she recognizes the value in those analytics, she firmly believes that the core of the position is to have your heart in the community. The stories, the people, the day-to-day lives of our stakeholders and friends.

"This is what I believe in," she said. "You have to have your heart in this place, and I know I do. I'm not going anywhere. My roots are here, and this is my home."

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Good luck, millenials

AGING HAS been on my mind this week.

Perhaps it's the upcoming Aging Together as Community conference slated for this coming weekend. Or maybe it's the multiple events that happened the past few days; which were predominantly put on by folks who are retired.

There is a noticeable dichotomy in this community. The old and the young. And we hear all the time about how we need to be mindful of our demographic. How a large percentage of residents in this place we call home are above the age of 65 (or more).

This aging population is the core of so many conversations. They change the real estate market, the advertising audiences, the services available around us.

EMILY STONEHOUSE
Editor

They're also the number one reason we have events and experiences in this community. Now I am speaking from personal experience, but with the organizations I have become affiliated with over my time in this community, the vast majority of participants fall within their senior years.

They bring experience, knowledge, and insight to the table in ways that generations after them couldn't dream of. At least not by themselves.

They also often hold onto a certain 'this is the way it's always been done' mindset, which both strengthens the resiliency of the event, whilst putting up blockers to change. Ups and downs, highs and lows.

If we want these events to continue in the community, there is a need for other generations to get involved. And I am the first to say that the millennial gang should be putting their best feet forward on that dance floor.

But that pressure that's put on so many millennials to keep communities afloat just isn't fair.

It's been noted that millennials are the generation who carry the most weight on their shoulders. They were the first (and only) generation to have a clear-cut memory of both a time before and after the internet and smartphones; making them particularly savvy to navigating the web, and the ins and outs of social media.

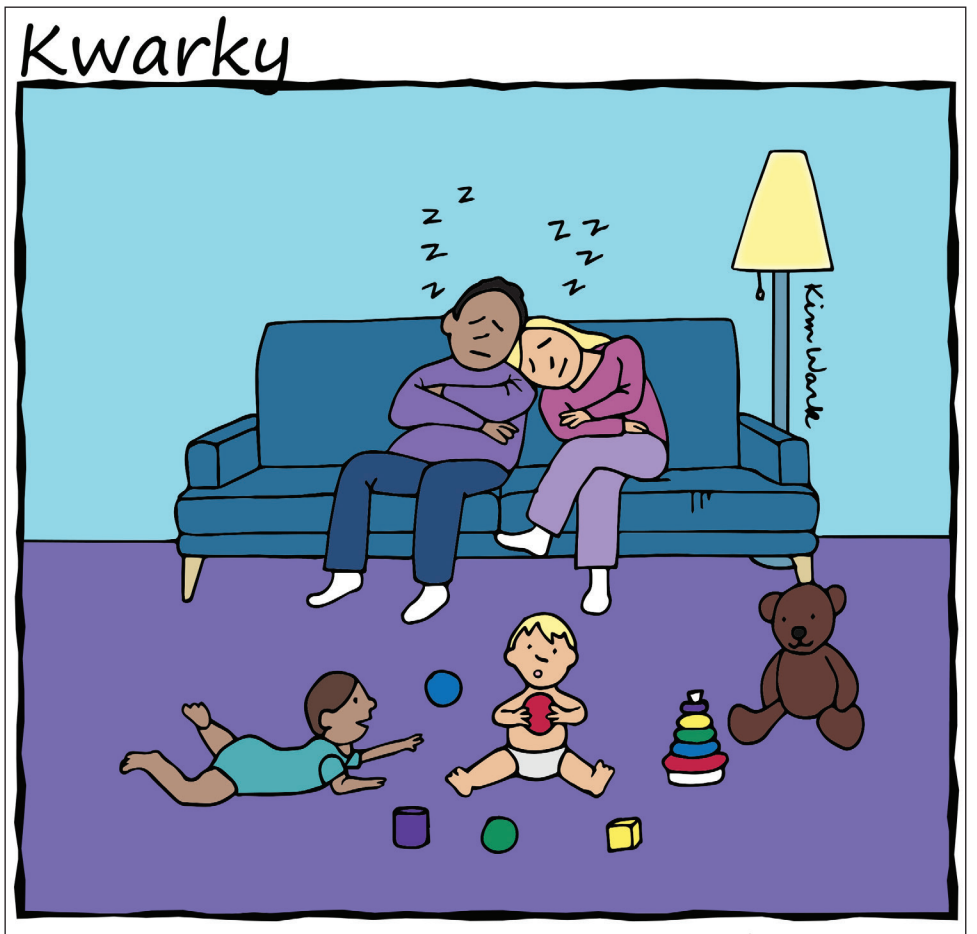
But this comes at a cost - the memory of a simpler time. It's been noted that millennials spend approximately 85 per cent of their days scrolling on their phones. Ironically, some of the accounts that exist online are reminiscent of their childhood.

I personally just saw a video that was circulated and shared widely amongst my friends of an old computer dialing up; partnered with a whimsical "remember when…" melody that alluded to those times gone by. The time where the internet was a separate entity from our persons, our priorities, our presence.

There is so much weight put on the shoulder of these millennials to step up and take the lead on these local events and experiences that are run by our retired friends. But as millennials, we are birthed with guilt already laden in our souls. Born into a world we actively know is burning, a knowledge of conflict and shame that's transpiring around us, and an embedded responsibility that it's our job to make it all better.

And maybe we will. We can certainly try. But the passing of the torch from one generation to the next shouldn't rely solely on the expectation placed upon each demographic. Perhaps it is time to really break down the generational dichotomies of this town, and focus more on celebrating all the folks who have the time, the energy, and the heart to make our community shine, instead of just the basics of age differences.

Because we all have something to offer, but it's stronger when we do it together.



"Looks like we're putting ourselves to bed again."

Plotting

A LOT HAS been made of the winter pastimes that we outdoors enthusiasts love. We talk about ice fishing, skiing, snowshoeing, running snow machines, and sometimes even rabbit hunting. But I think the primary activity of most outdoors people in winter is plotting.

And I don't mean this in a bad way either.

The plotting I'm talking about is the kind that has you making plans with friends for those trips in spring.

It starts off with a call from a buddy just to check in. Before you know it, you've planned a two-week expedition into Algonquin Park to find a secret brook trout lake that someone alluded to years ago.

STEVE GALEA
Beyond 35

You plan meticulously, just like you did last year. And, you swear, even though you both know lying is a sin, that this is the year for the trip – even though you swore that for the last five years running.

This plot immediately takes on a life of its own. In no time at all, you are both looking over maps, taking an inventory of your canoe camping gear, tying flies, and discussing which rods to take.

A short while later, after the fever breaks, you realize that there's no way you could get away from work, the family, or the dog for that long. Maybe you even realize that the trip you planned would have been barely doable when you were in your 20s, and now its completion would qualify as miraculous.

Oh, you are sure you could do it. But you are certain your friend couldn't, given their age and the shape they are in.

Of course, they are thinking the exact same things.

Here's where the real fun starts. Once the trip is planned in every detail, you play a game of chicken to see who backs out first. You certainly don't want to be that person. That's the person who gets called a wimp until you start the process again next year. So, the backing out starts tentatively, with a suggestion both can agree on.

Someone says, "You know, I was thinking, we don't need 14 days for this trip. We could probably do it in 10."

"I was thinking 7," the other person says. "That's attainable, if we paddle hard."

This goes on for a few days until you've whittled the trip down to two days, including the drive there and back, and settle on "a lake that's so close to the road that it is probably overlooked."

Even so, you know it won't happen. Why? Because your wife met his wife at the grocery store, and she divulged that their daughter is getting married on the very day you were supposed to start the trip.

Knowing now that he is definitely not going, you really turn up the heat.

"You know," you say on the next call, "I'm going to book the campsites early. You're still going right?"

"Yes, definitely," he says. "Book them."

This causes you to get a little irritated and think, "I can't believe this guy. Whatever happened to just being honest? Whatever happened to a friendship built on trust?"

Then, you remember he's your lifelong fishing buddy – and that means you have a special relationship. So, you smile, give him a call, and make up a story about a fish you just caught.

InOtherWords

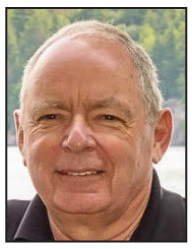
Columns and Letters to the Editor

Buffalo story offers hope

WE LIVE IN an increasingly crazy world that some believe is on a fast track to extinction. Perhaps, but despite humanity's destructive tendencies you have to believe the world's sanity can be restored.

That belief was reinforced recently when I watched a television documentary titled *The American Buffalo.*

It's a film filled with depressing facts about how shockingly self-centred and destructive we humans are. It tells how human greed destroyed tens of millions of North American buffalo (scientifically known as bison) and left the species on the edge of extinction.



JIM POLING SR.
From Shaman's Rock

Fortunately, total extinction was prevented by a few people who understood that all living things are related and depend on each other for survival.

For example, tons of buffalo dung incubated insect eggs and larvae that fed the birds. Buffalo wallows, packed depressions created when the animals rolled on the soil to protect themselves from insect bites, created depressions that collected rain water needed by different types of Prairie vegetation.

Without the huge herds of bison the Prairie ecosystem changed dramatically, along with the wildlife that lives there. Those vast grasslands will never return to what they were, but the efforts of the people who saved the bison give us hope that we are capable of avoiding other environmental catastrophes.

Today there are an estimated 300,000 bison in Canada and the U.S.; most of them living on ranches, parks or conservation areas. Most are believed to be descendants of 77 animals from five founding herds saved by environmentalists at the start of the 20th century.

In the 1700s and early 1800s there were an estimated 30 to 60 million bison in North America. Those numbers declined with the arrival of Europeans. Buffalo were slaughtered by the millions for their robes, and their tongues that were considered a culinary delicacy.

The slaughter increased with the arrival of the railways in the early 1870s and a new demand for buffalo hides that could be turned into leather drive belts for industrial machines.

The U.S. government actively endorsed the slaughter of buffalo as a way of forcing Indigenous Peoples onto reservations, who depended on buffalo for almost every aspect of life and without them had to accept reservation life.

By the late 1880s fewer than 100 buffalo were believed to be living wild in the United States. Commercial hunters, and joy hunters, had slaughtered them by the hundreds in single outings. They took the hides and tongues and left the rest to rot.

After the animals had rotted, others came, collected skulls and bones into towering piles and shipped them east to be sold and made into fertilizer, glue and ash. Bone material also was turned into commodities like bone china.

When the buffalo were gone, the hunters, including commercial operations, turned to killing large numbers elk, deer, moose and other animals that could bring them money or prestige.

The story of the North American buffalo slaughter and the efforts that saved the species from total extinction offers a critical lesson required to save other species, and in the end, our own civilization.

Scientists from around the world have reported that humans have wiped out 60 per cent of mammals, fish and reptiles since 1970. Some have reported that humans have destroyed 83 per cent of mammals and plants since the dawn of civilization.

A 2018 World Wildlife Report reported that our annihilation of wildlife now is an emergency threatening ourselves. Studies are not hard to find these days about the world already having entered a sixth mass extinction.

People who study these things say that nature is not just picturesque and nice to have around. It is a must for our own life support system.

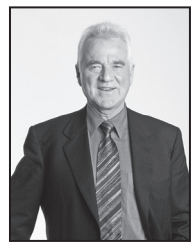
The few people who saved the buffalo understood that. And now we all need to understand that by slowly killing nature, we are slowly killing ourselves.

Government bureaucracy is out of control

IF YOU asked most Canadians if this country needs more bureaucrats, they'd probably say no.

Unfortunately, Canada's bureaucracy continues to mushroom in size, regulating and micro-managing more and more aspects related to how we live and work.

New figures published last week by the Public Service Commission of Canada show that the federal public service now stands at about 275,000 employees – an astounding 40 per cent increase from a decade ago – and that doesn't include another 85,000 civil servants working in affiliated government agencies.



FRANK STRONACH
Principles

If you then add in all of the civil servants working for provincial, regional and municipal governments across Canada, the total number of government employees in this country is around four million.

Why is that a problem?

It's a problem for two reasons. The first is that more bureaucrats equals more government spending – and that in turn leads to bigger deficits and more taxes.

But the other problem, which is perhaps even worse, is that more bureaucrats also means more regulations, permits and licenses. All of this red tape is strangling economic growth and progress, particularly for small business, and is one of the major reasons why our living standards are falling.

When I was CEO of Magna International Inc., I could always tell if one of our factories was struggling financially by the number of white collar workers in the offices above the factory floor. If you've got way too much administration up top, it doesn't matter how hard the employees on the factory floor work, your business simply won't be profitable. The same principle holds true for countries.

The fact is, we can't continue hiring more and more government workers year after year.

Government spending as a percentage of national GDP, or Gross Domestic Product, is closing in on 50 per cent. Back in the 1950s, when Canada's economy was booming, government spending as a percentage of GDP was just under 20 per cent. We had less government, and a higher standard of living.

The government approach to small business in Canada back in the 1950s and 60s was also much more conducive to creating jobs and growth. Government would do whatever it could to get businesses up and running. Today, however, it seems that governments put more of their time and energy into hampering and blocking business.

Canadians are forking over more and more of their paycheques to finance a sprawling government bureaucracy that increasingly does not enhance the quality of our lives. On the contrary, it makes our daily lives more complicated and costly, and it makes operating a small business more difficult.

So, what's the answer?

We need to return to some bedrock economic principles that will get our country back on a solid economic footing – principles like not spending more than we take in, eliminating our debt, and unleashing small business, the engine of our economy.

The best way to do that is through the adoption of a national economic charter of rights and responsibilities.

Think about this: there are approximately one million small businesses in Canada. If we dramatically reduced the mountain of regulations and red tape holding them back, these businesses would be free to expand and grow.

And if every small business in Canada hired just one single additional employee, we could create a million new jobs overnight. We would ignite economic growth on a scale this country hasn't seen in many decades.

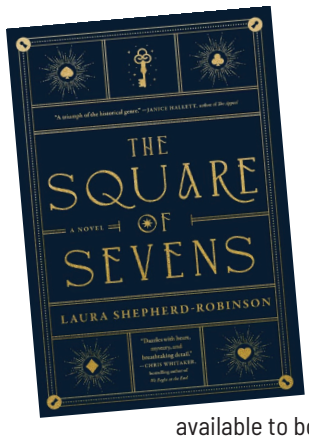
Size of Federal Civil Service Source: www.canada.ca/en/public-service-commission/services/publications/annual-reports/annual-report-2022-2023.html

Size of Spending on Civil Servant Salaries: publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2023/dpb-pbo/YN5-266-2023-eng.pdf

Frank Stronach is the founder of Magna International Inc., one of Canada's largest global companies, and was inducted into the Automotive Hall of Fame.

fstronachlpc@gmail.com

HCPL's Book of the Week

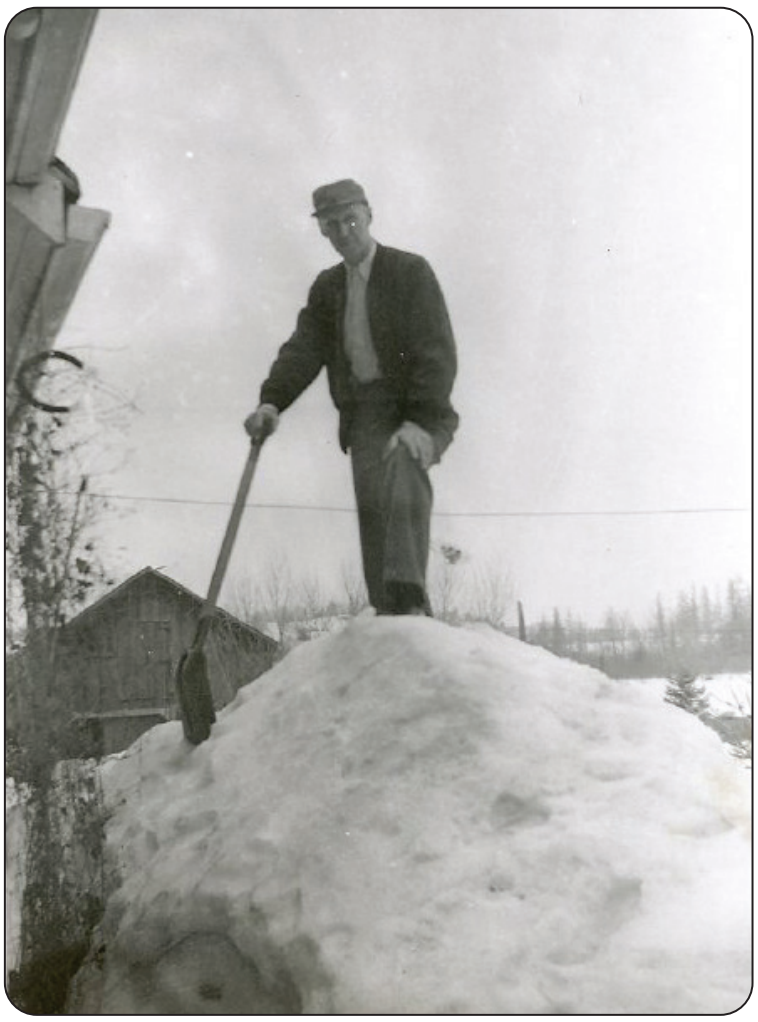


Cornwall, 1730: A young girl known only as Red travels with her father making a living predicting fortunes using the ancient Cornish method of the Square of Sevens. Shortly before he dies, her father entrusts Red's care to a gentleman scholar, along with the secret of the Square of Sevens technique.

Raised as a lady amidst the splendor of Bath, Red's fortune-telling delights in high society. But she cannot ignore the questions that gnaw at her soul: who was her mother? How did she die? And who are the mysterious enemies her father was always terrified would find him? While Red's pursuit of these mysteries brings her the possibility of great reward, it also leads to grave danger.

The Square of Sevens by Laura Shepherd-Robinson is available to borrow from the Haliburton County Public Library.

Minden Memories



Prominent town resident, Dick Kirkwood, shoveling snow in Minden in the mid-1900s. Kirkwood lived to be 100 years old, and died in 2007 in Minden. /Photo submitted by the Minden Hills Cultural Centre.

Community events sponsored by
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Seniors Chair Exercises
When: Thursdays, at 1 p.m.
Where: St. George's Anglican Church, 617 Mountain Street
Safe and gentle exercises for seniors to help with balance, strength and flexibility. Free to join.

Cribbage and Euchre
When: Tuesdays at 2 p.m.
Where: St. George's Anglican Church, 617 Mountain St.
Please join us Tuesdays for cribbage and Euchre at St. George's Anglican Church. With funding from the Government of Ontario. Please contact lynnhiggsthompson@haliburtonanglican.ca for more information.

Super Cash Calendar Draws
When: Second Monday of the month, 6:30 p.m. January until October.
Where: Haliburton Legion
Three tickets pulled per night. First ticket winner receives $100, second ticket $200, and third ticket $500. Winners will be posted every month on www.haliburtonlions.com. Public is welcome to attend the draws at the Lions meetings.

Weekly Meat Rolls
When: Every Saturday, 3 p.m.
Where: Coboconk Legion, Hwy 48 & 35
Join us for our weekly meat draw at the Coboconk Legion. 5 spins for $10. The first 4 rounds are for highest and lowest score with 2 winners per round. The last round is for a prepare-it-yourself dinner for two. Additional spins for this round are available for $2 each. Call 705-454-8127 or email info@coboconklegion.ca for more information.

Ladies Auxiliary Luncheon
When: Jan. 26, 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Where: Coboconk Legion, Hwy 48 & 35
Please join us for a luncheon prepared by the Ladies Auxiliary. The cost is $13 to attend. Call 705-454-8127 or email info@coboconklegion.ca for more information.

Minden & District Horticultural Society Annual Pot Luck
When: Feb. 3, noon
Where: Our Lady of Fatima Church, 7 Bobcaygeon Rd. Minden
Please bring your own mug, plate, and utensils for the lunch. Lunch will be followed by a presentation by our guest Speaker Marilyn Bodogh, 'Hearts and Flowers.'

Lift Your Spirits!
An Afternoon of Music with Drew Allen
When: Saturday, Feb. 3, 2 to 4 p.m.
Where: Highland Hills United Church, 21 Newcastle St., Minden
Drew will be performing uplifting tunes for all ages, from Billy Joel to Gershwin, Bach to Disney. Tickets $20 in advance, $25 at the door. Family tickets $50. Light refreshments will be served, as well as a bake sale. This is a fundraiser for the church's elevator fund. Tickets online at eventbrite.ca (search for Lift Your Spirits and enter Minden as the location).

letters to the editor

Minden WILL matter...

To the Editor,

For 2023, having the Minden ER shut down was truly a life-changer on many levels. As we welcome 2024, where do we go now? Well, it starts with a plan of: i) 'sensible' housing and ii) transit planning iii) with economic development and growth which will lead to community projects like: iv) fulfilling and expanding on both Minden and Haliburton health centres and v) expansion of community centres such as an Aquatic Centre to compliment the great hockey and golf town in existence. How do we do this?

As CEO of BGR North Realty Group Inc, I am passionate about providing a variety of residential housing options for non-lake buyers with sensible design, flow and function. As Real Estate Investors (REI), Developers and Builders we provide multiple options for the ultimate goal of home ownership.

Hence in preparation for housing needs in our community, we currently have proposed 400+ doors for residential housing for Minden and Dysart et al area encompassing: i) one, two, and three-bedroom condos ii) purpose built rental community of variety of sizes and styles to accommodate the needs of the community, iii) townhomes and semis, iv) single family residential and v) a micro community.

With housing comes population growth, and TRANSIT is a key factor for mobility and employment. Alongside our strategic and proposed residential housing projects, we are working with the government re proposed transit plan for key corridors in our area.

For the Mid-North of Midland-Smith Falls-Pembroke-Sudbury, Minden is well positioned to provide a framework for controlled growth in cottage style communities. As a developer, when I look at the businesses in Minden Hills of structural steel, concrete, lumber, ICF, just to name a few…this is quite unique! Couple that with education, the arts, healthcare, camps, utility services, fire, police and paramedic as well as an array of social services; and are exposed to 'city type environments' of less than an hour drive…this truly makes Minden the 'gateway to the north for balanced living' for many generations to come.

Growth in small town communities, especially along 'waters-edge communities' is needed. Is it easy? NO. Can it be done? YES.

Minden WILL matter for its community and be an example for 'controlled growth'. Stay tuned!

Josie Giovenco
Toronto,

Thanks for slowing down

To the Editor,

Since the new S.G. Nesbitt Arena opened a couple of years ago, the traffic on Parkside Street and Prentice Street has increased greatly. These two roads are also used by many pedestrians of all ages, i.e. Archie Stouffer Students, the Daycare on Prentice St., seniors out for a stroll, and many others walking to and from their homes.

Because of concern for the safety of those using these roads, the Board of Directors for Staanworth Non Profit Housing Corporation wrote to Minden Hills Council requesting speed signs be installed to help slow down vehicle traffic.

Council responded by installing a very effective speed indicator on Parkside St. This instrument thanks and smiles at those who drive safely and reminds those driving too fast to slow down. The Board of SNPHC and the tenants from The Terrace and The Court would like to thank Minden Hills Council for responding to our safety concerns and we also thank the many drivers who are driving under the limit along these busy streets.

Jim Hicks,
For the Staanworth Terrace and Staanworth Court Tenants and the Board of Directors for Staanworth Non Profit Housing Corp., Minden

Council's wrong choices, where do they end?

To the Editor,

I am writing in response to your recent article titled "Ombudsman raps county's knuckles for closed meeting"

I do not believe that the Haliburton County Council convened the April 27th Closed Session meeting with the H.H.H.S. representatives included any scurrilous intentions by their staff or any individual Council members.

In fact, I am not at all sure that, based on their behaviour(s) beginning with the April 20th, 2023 closure announcement and similar behaviour that continue to this day, those speaking for and representing the H.H.H.S. Board would have made themselves available for a public meeting of any kind.

However, I am not at all impressed by the response, that council did the best they could and that, "We'll move forward with it.", as the Warden, Liz Danielsen's explanation. Seriously?? Haliburton County is an upper tier municipal government. Council includes 4 township municipal mayors and 4 township municipal deputy mayors. That's 4 municipalities represented by their eight highest ranking and long serving officials and staff that have the responsibility of advising council on the proper interpretation and application of the Municipal Act.

Since when is ignorance of the Law a defense? Furthermore, it is a frightening day when politicians can use a perceived "crisis" as an excuse to trample the rights of Citizens that are protected by Law. I really find Council's lack of contrition to be extremely distasteful. It sounds like they learned nothing and would do it the same way next time. Can we run stop lights in times of personal crisis? Can our Charter of Rights be set aside if a politician thinks the country is in crisis? Where does it end?

Equally, while the County Council seems to have begrudgingly accepted the finding and recommendations of the report, no apology was uttered or implied by Liz Danielsen on behalf of Council for the violation.

I also find it frustrating that in fact that other than a finding, many months later, of guilt by the Ombudsman there is no timely remedy or recourse available to the residents and ratepayers of Haliburton County when such violations occur.

Richard Bradley,
Moore Falls

July 2023 Year in Review

The Minden Times will be splitting up their 2023 Year in Review into weekly segments. Please see next week's Times for coverage from October to December, 2023.

AH public workers save the day for boy atop Dorset Tower

One recent day at the Dorset Tower was more than mere business as usual for some Algonquin Highlands public workers. Councillor Julia Shortreed related a story she'd recently heard about two of Thorn's staff. "They were working up there and there was a problem up at the top of the tower with a young lad who was terrified to come down," Shortreed said. "Nobody knew what to do, so Adam's two guys went up the tower ... coaxed him into coming down, bought him a shirt and ice cream."

Minden closes boardwalk for repairs

Minden Hills residents are asked not to use the boardwalk while work is undertaken to restore the structure. The boardwalk will be closed while repairs are carried out.

The public is asked to refrain from entering the construction site, using the boardwalk, or removing any barriers to the area during the restoration period.

It is anticipated that the project will take four to six weeks to complete.

Emotions high at first HHHS town hall

Thursday, July 29 brought on a few things: the last day of school for local kids, record-high heat waves, increased air quality statements, and the first time the Haliburton Highlands Health Services (HHHS) made a public appearance since they announced the Minden ED closure on April 20, 2023. The town hall was implemented as an action item out of the recent HHHS AGM, where communications were addressed as a major area of improvement for the organization. HHHS showed their new faces; with Lauren Ernst, the communications lead for HHHS as the moderator, and Veronica Nelson, the acting president and CEO of HHHS, who stepped into the role on June 12.

NDP promises to open up ED

The closure of the Minden Emergency Department (ED) continues to get political. Chris Glover, the MPP for Spadina–Fort York visited Minden on July 21 to chat with locals about the realities of a small town that has not had an ED since June 1, 2023.

"I've come here today because we need a hospital," said Glover. "We're going to keep putting the pressure on this government."

Stedmans back in business … soon

Don't worry, we won't have to wait much longer for the Minden Stedmans to open its doors again. "Only three or four more weeks," said Faisal Rasool, the owner of the business, when he spoke to the *Times* on July 19. While rumours swirled around about delays based on township regulations acting as a barrier for the re-opening, Rasool said that he was primarily met with support from the Minden municipality. "We ran into a problem with one of the pillars in the original building," he said, "so we had to bring in a structural engineer, and so we worked with the township on that."

The Marshall family from Milton watched over the fishing derby before making their way up to the Cultural Centre on Canada Day. /EMILY STONEHOUSE

Principal Jenn Mills laughs while Noa Yates poses for a photo. /ADAM FRISK

Two thumbs up for the Minden Minor Baseball League. /TIM YANO

The Bateman family joined together for the opening of the Bateman exhibit at the Minden Hills Cultural Centre. /Submitted

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August 2023 Year in Review

Kilcoo director accused of assault; court claims filed

The well-known Kilcoo Camp just south of Minden has made the news, and not for any of the right reasons. The prestigious camp's former director, David Latimer, was accused of sexual misconduct that arose in the 1990s and early 2000s. Two cases were put forward, with the plaintiffs identified as J. Doe # 1 and J. Doe # 2. Due to the ages of the plaintiffs at the time of the alleged incidents, both cases are currently seeking a sealing and non-publication order on their names.

'Why we need Pride'

It's here. The one week of the year where we drape rainbows from the flagpoles and spend a little extra time celebrating love. It's supposed to be a time of joy, a time of inclusion, a time of progress. But this year, a dark cloud is looming over the upcoming week. "A number of negative social media messages have been posted toward Minden Pride," said Pride Chair Allan Guinan. "Certainly there is a sentiment that some are tired of the exposure we receive." This year, the Pride committee has dealt with their flags being torn down throughout the downtown core, their banner cut from the Loggers Bridge and held down at the bottom of the river with rocks, and a series of angry comments, accusations, and homophobic slurs on their social media platforms.

Bob Fisher shows off his brightest outfit choices at the Minden Pride flag raising. /Submitted by Justin VanLieshout

The Movie Man ready for release

Many have heard murmurings of the much-awaited *Movie Man* documentary coming out soon. The film, which features the beloved Highlands Cinema in Kinmount and the heart and soul behind the movies, Keith Stata, was started in 2018 by Matt Finlin of Door Knocker Media. While Finlin is eager to get the film in front of local eyes so that viewers recognize these familiar faces, he noted that showing the film publicly would disqualify him from international film festivals, and as an independent filmmaker, he is reliant on these festivals to get the word out. "We are aiming for it to land somewhere by the end of September," he said, noting that the film was just completed two weeks ago.

The Rockcliffe hits a wall

"We're not turning our backs on Minden, but it's the end of an era for the original Rockcliffe." Those somber words were shared by Rockcliffe owner Mark Dracup during an interview with the *Times* in reference to the council decision that put an end to the development of the restaurant in the downtown core. These plans were halted though when the owners of the Rockcliffe were told on Friday, Aug. 4 that their plans to expand the downtown location were denied. The owners decided to stick to their Moore Falls location exclusively.

Jurisdictional issues plague short-term rental governance

There lingered many questions behind the logistics of administering and enforcing a short-term rental bylaw in Haliburton County's municipalities. After much discussion, county council decided July 26 to circulate a draft bylaw to the lower tier municipalities for adoption in the interest of consistency. County staff was directed to work with the municipalities to craft a request for proposals for a third party to administer the short-term rental program.

Craig Bowker shows how high a Flyboard can take a person up in the air. /Submitted

As per tradition, this year's prizes at the Highland Yard were once again mugs made by a local potter. This year, the mugs were made by Lisa Barry of Homestead Pottery. /BRAD BROWN

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September 2023 Year in Review

Stanhope Fire Station | celebrates 50 Years

Kids of all ages gathered in Stanhope for the 50th anniversary of the Stanhope Fire Station. With everything from fire trucks, clothing and equipment, a barbecue, and lots of fire fighters to answer questions, the open house had something for everyone.

Huskies split opening weekend, announce new additions

It is the time that Haliburton County hockey fans have been waiting for; the return of hockey season. With a new look Huskies roster taking on the OJHL this season, fans eagerly awaited the opening weekend double header. One of the biggest changes was behind the bench, while Ryan Ramsay returned for his 3rd season as head coach and GM, his assistant coaches saw a massive shake up. Gone are Brian Mackenzie and Jordan Bailey, and in are Matt Comand and Owen Flood.

'You're saying we don't exist': why Minden Pride stood their ground

On Sept. 20, a protest was scheduled for Head Lake Park titled the '1 Million March 4 Children'.

The idea behind the march was to fight against the current public school curriculum, which teaches diversity, inclusion, and 2SLGBTQIA+ areas of interest. The march was scheduled to occur in communities around the country, but when word got out about the transphobic undertones of the protest, people started standing up. "It's a rhetoric I didn't think we'd ever have to experience here in Canada," said Minden Pride chair Allan Guinan, "we had people in tears. If this is removed from the curriculum, what does that say to the queer community?"

Population, job growth predicted for Haliburton County

Haliburton County's population growth doubled the provincial average over the last five years.

That's one of the details uncovered by economists looking into population and demographic trends in the county. The county had 2.9 per cent growth between 2016-21. That's compared to an overall rate of 1.5 per cent 2001-21. "A three per cent growth rate is a very significant growth rate," Cook said. "It's about double the provincial average over that five-year period."

A lot of that growth came from people who previously lived seasonally in the county.

Kinmount Citizens of the Year announced at fair

The Kinmount Fair means many things; candy apples, games, vendors, rides.

But one of the most anticipated events each year is the announcement of Kinmount's Citizen of the Year, presented by the Kinmount Lions Club. This year, there were not one, but two announced: Darlene Mann, a "community minded artist", and Alan Howard who was as an instrumental figure in the recruitment of physicians.

The Minden Times will be splitting up their 2023 Year in Review into weekly segments. Please see next week's Times for coverage from October to December, 2023.

Prize winners walk through the middle of the fair during the parade./TIM YANO

The fifth annual Hurtin in Haliburton Gravel Relay Race was held at Haliburton Forest on Friday, Sept. 15 and Saturday, Sept. 16. The eight hour race featured a 27 km loop through gravel roads with the opportunity to race solo or in a team of two. /VIVIAN COLLINGS

Faisal Rasool, the owner of Stedman's in Minden, stand proudly in front of the store after they opened their doors on Tuesday, Sept. 5. /EMILY STONEHOUSE

Eden Folco smiles ear to ear on her first day of Grade 1 at Archie Stouffer. /Submitted

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Game face

Goaltender Brett Fullerton takes a breath during a tense game against the Burlington Cougars on Jan. 20 in Minden. /TIM YANO special to the *Times*

Above, the Huskies try to defend their net against the Cougars.

Left, Patrick Saini, #75 faces off against the Cougars. The Huskies lost 4-1.

Using the internet to better understand politics

ENGAGING WITH politics and government decision making can be a difficult task. It is very easy to feel detached from the political process. Our political discourse can be a minefield of social media memes and partisan commentary that can take away from understanding the nuts and bolts of the actual work our governments carry out. For many of us, the only time we actively participate in the political process is during an election, when candidates are doing their best to convince us that they can do the best job of representing their communities. While this is certainly an intense phase of our political cycle, it's also a comparatively tiny part of it. The important part is what happens in between elections. Fortunately, there is plenty of opportunity online to be a fly on the wall and observe our governments in action.

ERIN KERNOHAN-BERNING
Humans and Technology

It's important to understand that various levels of government are responsible for delivering different things. In Canada, decision making generally happens through elected representatives – this is the by-the-people part of a democratic government. We vote for someone in our community to represent us – whether federally, provincially, or municipally – to contribute to the decisions made at those different levels of government.

Our municipal governments manage some of the most tangible aspects of our day-to-day. They're responsible for many of the roads we drive on, water and sanitation systems, landfills, among many other local services and infrastructure. Today, many municipal councils across Canada offer ways to view their meetings online, both live and on-demand. From the comfort of home, you can watch council meetings on YouTube, including those of our own local municipalities, as well as view agendas and meeting minutes online.

Among our provincial government's responsibilities, education and health care are probably most keenly felt by individuals. The Ontario Legislative Assembly is televised on the Ontario Parliamentary Channel, as well as streamed on their website. On demand videos can be found on the Ontario Legislature YouTube channel as well. The provincial government also maintains a transcript of proceedings called a Hansard, which is available online and indexed by topic. A Hansard is the official record of government debates and includes what was said and how our elected officials voted. The Legislative Assembly website also includes profiles of MPPs and shows the Bills they introduced in the Assembly, as well as links to the Hansard transcript of the debates regarding those Bills. Legislative assemblies across Canada offer a similar window into their proceedings.

Our federal government deals with concerns of a country-wide nature such as citizenship and immigration, Indigenous relations, and copyright, as well as certain shared responsibilities with the provinces including natural resources and public health. Similar to the provincial governments, the House of Commons is broadcast on television and also has a website where you can view parliamentary proceedings, read the Hansard transcript, and view profiles of MPs.

At the federal level, Canada also has a non-elected body – classically called our "sober second thought" – the Senate. The Senate's purpose is to study the legislation produced by the House of Commons and, if there is something concerning in that legislation, send the legislation back with suggested amendments. The website for the Senate of Canada includes live streams and recordings of debates and committee meetings, and Senator profiles.

Even though so much information is readily available, it can still be a chore to wade through. Our news media is one means available to understanding the political process, and journalism is considered to be a corner stone of democracy for this reason. Locally, for instance, our newspapers summarize key outcomes from the various council meetings across the County. Likewise, politicians who are interested in doing so can point their constituents to specific examples of their work. For example, Senator Paula Simons is very active on social media, and regularly links to specific Senate proceedings online for issues she's been directly involved in. There are also easy to navigate sites such as OpenParliament.ca which lets you search for your MP by area code, and then provides a summary of what they've been up to in the House of Commons.

With so many priorities vying for our attention, we don't necessarily have time to know absolutely everything that happens in our various levels of government. But given how much information is at our fingertips, when we see political memes and commentary online, we shouldn't take them at face value. Rather we should be curious and use these resources to better understand what is actually happening so we can engage with politics in a productive way – and not just at election time.

To find links to the resources mentioned in this article along with further reading, visit www.erinkernohan.ca.

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NOTICE OF SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETINGS – 2024 BUDGET

The Corporation of the Township of Minden Hills is preparing its 2024 Municipal Budget. These meetings will be held in the Minden Hills Council Chambers located on 7 Milne Street, Minden, On. Meetings to commence at 9:00 AM. Any change in location, date, or time will be advertised.

Council commenced its overview of the Draft Budget and Business Plan at the January 18, 2024 Special Meeting.

Council will consider the 2024 Draft Budget and Business Plan at several upcoming meetings

- **Thursday, February 1, 2024**: Operating and Capital Budget review for the Fire Department; Public Works Department; and Water/Wastewater.

  The Adoption of the Water and Sewer rates will be considered at the February 1, 2024 meeting; however, the bylaws are to be passed at the following February 8, 2024 Regular Council meeting.

- **Monday, February 5, 2024**: Operating and Capital Budget review for the Community Services Department; Planning and Building Departments, and Administration Department.

- **Tuesday, March 5, 2024**: Potential date to Adopt and finalize the 2024 Budget.

Please note that dates are subject to change and are dependent on deliberation discussion and direction of Council.

Supported material including the Budget Book will be provided on the agenda package located on the CivicWeb portal site.

If you have any questions, please contact:

Greg Bedard
Director of Finance/Treasurer
(705) 286-1260 Ext 504
gbedard@mindenhills.ca

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Dreaming of dance

by **EMILY STONEHOUSE**
Editor

Dance should be for everyone.

That's why Skyline Dance Studio, located in the heart of Haliburton County, launched their bursary program; to allow anyone who dreams of dancing to join in on the fun. "At Skyline, our mission is to create a family atmosphere where dancers of all ages feel safe to be who they are and express themselves creatively," said Allison Cox, the chair of the Skyline board.

Having opened their doors in October of 2022, Skyline works with seven instructors over the full season, and offers programs to over 200 local dancers. With registration increasing over 20 per cent since opening, it's clear that there was a drastic need for the programming in the county.

The studio offers both competitive and recreational classes in ballet, jazz, tap, contemporary, lyrical, acro, hip hop and musical theater. This year, they also added a "tumbling" class that mirrors exercises traditionally practiced in gymnastics classes.

For those under the age of five, Skyline runs ballet, jazz, and acro, plus "The Music Class", and Parent and Tot classes for ages one to four.

But the programming isn't just designed for kids. The studio also offers classes for adults and seniors, with regular pilates, tap classes for those 55 and up, and Zumba Gold classes for adults.

Skyline is a not-for-profit, and continues to rely heavily on the kindness and generosity of the community to stay afloat. They recognize that building a dance studio from scratch is no easy feat, and they continue to celebrate the community by means of thanks.

That's why they began to offer the bursary program; to find a way to give back to the community that they believe has held them up over the past year and a half.

"We believe each student has the ability to increase their physical, emotional, and intellectual well-being through movement," said Cox, "and we wanted to be able to ensure more students could be supported to join us, which is why this bursary program is so pivotal."

The bursary was made possible from a portion of the original founding sponsors, which was specifically set aside with the intentions of offering financial support down the road.

It offers $500 for a student between the ages of two and 18, and is open for anyone who has a passion for dance, but needs a little help financially to attain that dream.

To learn more about the bursary opportunity and to apply, reach out to info@skylinedancestudio.ca.

Skyline Dance Studio has officially launched their bursary program, to ensure kids have equal access and opportunities to participate in dance classes. /FILE PHOTO

The search is on for Helen

The dramatic story of Helen Keller's escape from her dark and silent prison is one that has captivated audiences for years. The play, which relates the patient and remarkable efforts of her tutor, Annie Sullivan, to open the world to this child, returns to the Highlands Summer Festival stage this summer.

There is no question *The Miracle Worker*, by William Gibson, is a compelling tale, one that audiences around the world have praised as brilliant and moving. It is also a dramatic presentation that asks a great deal of its actors, particularly Annie Sullivan, but equally so the young actress who plays the child, Helen Keller.

Jasmin Nelson (then Jasmin Purnell) was the actress who carried the role in our 2006 production. Her participation as a twelve-year-old, is an enduring memory for this mother and Early Childhood Educator. "Being a part of *The Miracle Worker* brought me so much joy," Jasmin commented recently looking back on the experience. "I loved working alongside the energetic and caring cast and crew. It was a lot of work, but also a lot of fun." The experience was challenging but it also taught her many life lessons that are still with her today. "That role enriched me with determination and drive," she said. "I will never forget that exciting summer when I had a chance to play the role of Helen Keller."

That opportunity awaits some budding young actor as the Highlands Summer Festival has begun its search to find a girl aged 11-13 to bring this exciting role to life once again on the Northern Lights stage. "I think this is the role of a lifetime," Scot Denton, Festival Artistic Producer and director of the play stated. "It is a challenging role, but one, as Jasmin has described, that will become a watershed moment in their life."

Auditions for this role and for other roles in the play will be held January 27 and 28 at St. George's Anglican church. Actor's parents or guardians should visit the Highlands Summer Festival website at www.highlandssummerfestival.on.ca and follow the links from the home page to the Audition Package for more details or call Stella Voisin at 705-457-4524.

The summer lineup also has roles for additional actors in *The Miracle Worker*, in the musical, *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee* as well as the comedy, *The Birds & The Bees*. Follow the links on the website above for more information about these productions and casting.

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Level: Intermediate

Fun By The Numbers

Like puzzles? Then you'll love sudoku. This mind-bending puzzle will have you hooked from the moment you square off, so sharpen your pencil and put your sudoku savvy to the test!

Here's How It Works:
Sudoku puzzles are formatted as a 9x9 grid, broken down into nine 3x3 boxes. To solve a sudoku, the numbers 1 through 9 must fill each row, column and box. Each number can appear only once in each row, column and box. You can figure out the order in which the numbers will appear by using the numeric clues already provided in the boxes. The more numbers you name, the easier it gets to solve the puzzle!

Answers on page 2

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – January 15, 2024

The public is invited to a Public Information Centre (PIC) on the Haliburton Floodplain Mapping Project which is a Joint Initiative by the County of Haliburton, Ganaraska Conservation and Kawartha Conservation. The project is being funded in part by Natural Resources Canada's Flood Hazard Identification & Mapping Program (FHIMP).

Aiming to strengthen community resilience and safety, the County of Haliburton, in collaboration with the two conservation authorities, has initiated a vital study focused on preparing floodplain mapping for the Gull River and Burnt River systems. This initiative primarily seeks to enhance our understanding of flood risks within the County and to make our communities more resilient to flood risks.

Floodplain mapping plays a crucial role in guiding decisions related to safeguarding people and properties from natural hazards.

We cordially invite residents and other interested community members to a Public Information Centre. Here, attendees will have the opportunity to examine the study area, learn about how flood hazards are mapped, and engage in discussions with members of the project team. The community's participation in this event is highly encouraged. Final deliverables for this project are anticipated to be available this March.

The PIC is scheduled for Monday, January 29th, 2024, from 4:00pm to 8:00pm at the Minden Community Centre, located at 55 Parkside Street, Minden, ON, and will be held in Room 2.

For more information, please contact: Steve Stone, Director of Planning for the County of Haliburton, 11 Newcastle Street, Minden, Ontario K0M 2K0, Phone: 705-286-1333 ext. 222

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Dearest Saint Rita It is with sincere thankfulness and confidence that I bless you and thank you for your intercession. Your power over the hopeless has given us everything. Continued devotion to you and the Sacred Heart and thanks to all who have helped. L.E.M.

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540 COMING EVENTS

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Thank you

From the Family of Jean Margaret Tyler

We extend our heartfelt thanks to our families and friends for their kindness and the support shown for our Mother, Jean Margaret Tyler, who passed away on January 7, 2024. We thank the dedicated staff of the Haliburton Highlands Health Services including the Physicians who attended to her during her hospital stay, as well as the Nursing and Physiotherapy staff, the Personal Support Workers and Support Services staff, all who work tirelessly caring for their patients.

The ongoing support that our Mother received from the community enabled her to live independently in her home into her 98th year. We would like to recognize the excellent health care provided by the Family Physicians of the Haliburton Highlands Family Health Team. Thank you to the staff of Home and Community Care Support Services, Community Programs and their caring PSWs, housekeepers and drivers. Thank you to the many local businesses who ensured that our Mother's home remained cared for and safe, including Jim Elstone and the Briggs family, Nathan Petrini and his staff, the Warburton family, Ed Burke and so many more, we thank you all. We are especially grateful to the late Peter Varty and his family, who kept a caring eye on our Mother for so many years.

Thank you to the staff at Haliburton Community Funeral Home and Reverend Harry Morgan for their professionalism and attention to detail making our Mother's visitation and service a special reunion of family and friends.

Sharon, Cathy and John

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Effects are being felt here

Hospital bed squeeze

The impact of decreased bed capacity in the Ontario health care system is starting to be seen at Haliburton Hospital.

According to Foster Loucks, executive director of the Haliburton Highlands Health Services Board, the shortage of beds in the larger centres in the province is now being felt in the small facility in Haliburton. He said, recently the ten bed hospital has had up to three patients on stretchers in the hallways.

Loucks said, in the past, larger hospitals in Toronto, Peterborough or even Lindsay have been able to help ease the pressure on the local hospital, however these facilities are also scrambling to accommodate patients and have little or no excess capacity.

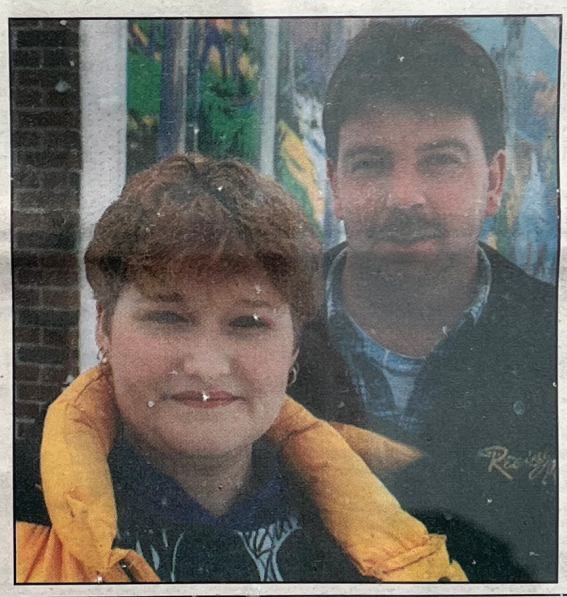
The Haliburton Hospital has ten inpatient beds. The nine inpatient beds at the Minden hospital were closed a number of years ago as a cost cutting measure and because of a drop in the number of doctors serving the community.

Loucks said part of the reason for the shortage of beds at the Haliburton Hospital was the lack of places to locate long-term care patients. He said these patients are admited into the hospital because they have no other place to go, and must wait for a placement to open in one of the long-term care facilities in the area. He noted that these individuals would be better served in a long-term care setting, such as Hyland Crest or Extendicare. While theyare being accommodated in the Haliburton Hospital they are occupying a place that could be used by an acute care patient.

The construction of the 30 new long-term care beds facility adjacent to the Haliburton Hospital should help to ease that problem. It is scheduled to open later this year.

(more on page 2)

SNOWARAMA FIRST: Robert Thompson of Beaverton was the first rider to head out onto the trails Saturday morning at the Haliburton Forest and Wildlife. He watches as Haliburton Rotarian Brian Black tops up his tank while fellow sledders, Ken Bradly, left and Lisa Thompson in the background, await their turn. The annual fund raising ride for Easter Seals is sponsored by the Rotary Club of Haliburton.
RIGHT: Two Minden riders, Lisa and Mark McKinna had a special reason to take part. Their daughter, Alexa, who has cerebral palsy, has benefited from the services offered through the Easter Seal Society. The couple collected over $600 in pledges from generous area residents.



99 riders raised $18,000 in the annual Easter Seal Snowarama held Saturday at the Haliburton Forest and Wilife Trails. Club spokesman Jim Richards reported it was an excellent day for the ride, with ideal weather and trail conditions. Carrying the highest amount in pledges for the second year in a row was Randy Grant of Uxbridge, who raised $2,500 for the charity.

This is the twenty-fifth year for the Easter Seal Snowarama fund raising ride and according to Easter Seal Society community co-ordinator, Anne Driscoll, without events such as the one sponsored by Haliburton Rotary the special needs of many children would go unmet.

Driscoll was on hand Saturday morning as hundreds of snowmobil-

(more on page 5)

Jeanne Sears: *a community-minded citizen*

Minden has lost one of its most popular residents with the passing of Jeanne Sears.

Jeanne died Tuesday, (January 26), just a few days short of her eightieth birthday.

She was well-known throughout the community because of her involvement with many organizations and activities. Always a willing volunteer and an eager worker, Jeanne constantly lent herself to the betterment of the community. She served as Minden' Librarian from 1966 to 1984, was an active member of the Minden Women's Institute, an organization she joined in 1949, helped champion the cause of the County Town Museum and was always willing to help when things needed to be done.

Her many areas of volunteerism included: the Minden Recreation Board; Girl Guides; Home and School Association; Red Cross; Library Board; Women's Institute; Royal Canadian Legion, Branch 636; Anglican Church Women; Winter Carnival Committee; Centennial Celebration Committee; as well as volunteering as a knitting and crocheting instructor at the school and in the community

Jeanne was probably best known as the author of the popular community column in this newspaper (and others in the area) for more than 25 years.

(more on page 2)

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